



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Inc.

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February 23, 2009

Testimony in regard to:

Support for Proposed Bill No. 5267 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF FUNDS UNDER THE SMALL TOWN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR PROJECTS THAT CONVERT FARMLAND TO OTHER USES.

Submitted by: Don Tuller, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of nearly 5,000 families dedicated to farmers and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, members of the Environment Committee:

As President of Connecticut Farm Bureau and a farmer, I am submitting the following testimony to express CT Farm Bureau's support for Proposed Bill No. 5267.

The premise of Proposed Bill 5267 appears sound, but may not be strong enough. The bill does identify a serious concern that we share; Municipalities should be encouraged to protect prime farmland and should be discouraged from using state funds to destroy it. If provision (1) starting on line 6, was the only remedy proposed, the bill would be stronger. As the proposed bill stands, a municipality could simply establish a dedicated farmland preservation fund with as little as \$1 in it and that would appear to meet the conditions of this proposal.

Proponents of STEAP projects should consider the impact that the project will have on the agriculture and farming in the community and Connecticut. This may help steer projects in more positive directions, enabling decision makers to fully consider alternatives that lessen negative impacts on farmland and the ability to farm particular farm properties. The State of Connecticut invests millions of dollars for the purchase of developments rights of agricultural lands every year. Proper review and mitigation of STEAP projects that convert finite prime and important agricultural land to nonagricultural uses is a necessary step that should be taken when spending scarce state dollars.

We encourage you to strengthen the language of Proposed Bill No. 5267 in order to make it a more effective tool to discourage using state dollars to convert prime farmland to nonagricultural use.

Don Tuller farms with his family on Tulmeadow Farm in West Simsbury.